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FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5398
INFO RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 6484
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO PRIORITY 7259
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC 2515

UNCLAS SAO PAULO 000766

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STATE INR/R/MR; IIP/R/MR; WHA/PD

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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [OPRC](#) [OIIP](#) [ETRD](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WESTERN HEMISPHERE: VENEZUELA, CHAVEZ; SAO PAULO

"Red Light"

Former Brazilian President Jose Sarney wrote in liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo (7/14): "South America is the most peaceful continent. We have not had a war for over one hundred years. Democracy is consolidated throughout the region. We have never permitted an arms race.... [But] now [Venezuelan President Hugo] Chavez's plan to spend USD 60 billion in arms, thereby transforming Venezuela into a military power is a threat against the continent. He has said he will remain in power until 2031 and that he is an 'integrationist.' But who knows whether the president of Venezuela thinks that he should occupy the Amazon to avoid its internationalization? With the new military equipment - 14 SU-25 fighters, 600,000 GPS-guided bombs, China-made JYL highly sophisticated 3-D radar stations, 10 to 15 submarines, 138 warships and 150 supersonic jets - our sovereignty can turn to dust. No one ever imagined that such a situation could occur in the South American continent. What's the reason for all this? To face the United States? This does not mean anything for the superpower, but for us it is a frightening force. Either Brazil enters the arms race to ensure its defense, by removing resources from social programs, or it will have to look for protection under the NATO's umbrella."

McMullen